

Dumbarton house  
2715 Q Street, N. W.  
Georgetown, District of Columbia

HABS No. ~~DE-16~~ DC-434

HABS  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

District of Washington, D. C.

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Delos H. Smith, District Officer  
1707 Eye St., N.W., Washington, D. C.

Addendum to  
Dumbarton House (Bellevue; Rittenhouse Place;  
National Headquarters of the National Society  
of Colonial Dames of America)  
2715 Q Street, NW (moved from end of Q Street  
above Rock Creek)  
Washington  
District of Columbia

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS  
DC,  
GEO,  
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ARCHITECTURAL DATA FORM

STATE District of Columbia	COUNTY	TOWN OR VICINITY Washington
HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME) Dumbarton House		HABS NO. DC-434
SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE Bellevue; Rittenhouse Place; National Headquarters of the National Society of Colonial Dames of America		
COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES) 2715 Q Street, NW (moved from end of Q Street above Rock Creek)		
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE) ca. 1799	ARCHITECT(S) (INCLUDE SOURCE) not known	
SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL, INCLUDE ORIGINAL USE OF STRUCTURE) Good example of late Georgian 5-part mansion. Early 19th century remodelling attributed to noted architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe.		
STYLE (IF APPROPRIATE) Late Georgian		
MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS) Brick		
SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABLE) 5-part mansion plan with wings and connecting hyphens; 2½-story		
EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE Gable roofs on wings; hipped roof on main block; central block has 5 bays with slightly projecting entrance bay that has a pedimented cross gable; 1-story wooden entrance portico with heavy paired Ionic columns and wide entablature; 2-story circular bows in rear; Doric cornice.		
INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (DESCRIBE FLOOR PLANS, IF NOT SKETCHED) Central hall plan.		
MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES Early 19th century remodeling attributed to Benjamin Henry Latrobe; at that time, second story windows lengthened and balconies, porticos and rear bays added; main block moved to present location in 1915; restored 1931, Horace Peaslee restoration architect.		
PRESENT CONDITION AND USE Condition good; used as historic house museum.		
OTHER INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE		
SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDING LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER, STATE REGISTERS, ETC.) Schwartz, Nancy B. <u>Historic American Buildings Survey District of Columbia Catalog, 1974.</u> Category II District of Columbia Landmark.		
COMPILER, AFFILIATION Alison K. Hoagland, HABS (edited by Druscilla J. Null, HABS)		DATE 6/29/83

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY**

**DUMBARTON HOUSE**  
(Bellevue)  
(Rittenhouse)

This report is an addendum to a one-page report previously transmitted to the Library of Congress.

Location: 2715 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.

Present Owner: The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America

Present Use: House museum and headquarters for the Society

Significance: Fiske Kimball pre-eminent restoration architect/architectural historian/museum director, wrote that Dumbarton House was "... Once one of the very finest and most beautiful houses in the United States" (April 30, 1931 letter). More recently, Wendell Garrett in The Magazine Antiques reaffirmed Kimball's view. Garrett wrote "Although its architect is unknown, it belongs to an exceptional group of severe and attenuated Federal houses. . . The architectural distinction of these houses reflects the skills of the talented French, Italian, and American craftsmen who flocked to the region in the 1790's. . ." (January 1993 issue)

The combination of its fine, quite unusual Federal Period architecture and outstanding collection of Federal Period furnishings, assembled by the Society, gives Dumbarton House architectural and historical significance as both an outstanding example of Federal Period architecture and as an important articulation of the mid twentieth-century interpretation of Federal Period aesthetics and history. Dumbarton House's significance is further heightened by the importance of its various owners and the insights its history offers into the physical evolution of Georgetown.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of erection: When the Colonial Dames purchased this house, they believed it was a house of the colonial period, specifically a house built in 1751. While that date is no longer accepted, there is a tradition that the west wing of the house dated from the mid-eighteenth century. That wing, along with the east wing, was demolished in 1915.

The National Society's restoration architect Horace Peaslee and consulting architect Fiske Kimball argued that stylistic features and the discovery of an 1800 coin during the restoration established the house as having been built in the Federal Period, so they restored the house in 1931-1932 to that period. Sixty years later, architect Martin Rosenblum who designed the Society's ballroom and renovated parts of the building confirmed Kimball and Peaslee's conclusion.

But it was only last year that Dumbarton House architectural history intern Karri Jurgens produced archival evidence confirming the early 1800's date. She discovered a March 1804 auction notice which described ". . . a large two story brick house with a passage through the center, four rooms on a floor and good cellars. The front rooms are about 17 by 18 feet—the back rooms are semicircular and are about 22 by 17 feet—the passage 9 feet wide and 38 feet long - two brick office two stories high, 17 feet 6 inches square and are connected with the House by covered ways. The said premises are the same property possessed by . . . Samuel Jackson and by him expensively improved." ("A Preliminary Study of the Architectural History of Dumbarton House", Karri L. Jurgens, October 20, 1998, p. 6). The quoted descriptions corresponds closely to the Dumbarton House as it exists today. Jurgens believes that a house existed prior to 1798 when Samuel Jackson bought the land and that he enlarged the house before being forced to sell it in 1804 as the auction notice states that he expensively improved it. She bolsters her case with language in earlier deeds that refers to house or houses, but this language is legalese that might be included in any deed, regardless of whether any structure had been erected.

Apparently unbeknownst to these researchers was the earlier work by William A. Gordon, a prominent real estate lawyer, life-long Georgetown resident, and often a court-appointed trustee for real estate transactions. In 1914 he presented a paper before the Columbia Historical Society (now the Historical Society of Washington) based on his recollections of growing up in nineteenth century Georgetown and his research in legal records (at the National Archives). In his paper "Old Homes on Georgetown Heights", which was published the next year, he stated "Between then (1796) and 1805, when sold to Joseph Nourse, it passed through several hands. It went to Nourse through a chancery suit instituted by the United States against the several parties who held under Casenave. The fact that the dwelling house had been erected shortly before the year 1802 appears in the proceedings,. . ." (Records of the Columbia Historical Society, page 85, volume 18). As Gordon had the best training for evaluating legal documents and his statement of the house being erected shortly before 1802. It can further be concluded from Gordon's statement that Jackson erected the house shortly before 1802 and then "expensively improved" it sometime before it was auctioned in the winter of 1804. The research of Jurgens and Gordon convincingly establishes that the house present in 1804 is the house owned by the Colonial Dames and that it was built shortly before 1802.

## 2. Original and subsequent owners:

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1703-1717	Ninian Beall (patented by him in 1703)
171-1780	George Beall
1780-1796	Thomas Beall
June 1796-August 1796	Peter Casenave
August 1796	Uriah Forest
August 1796-July 1798	Isaac Polock
July 1798-May 1804	Samuel Jackson
May 1804-April 1805	Gabriel Duvall
April 1805-July 1813	Joseph Nourse (Nourse moved into the house in 1804, but 1805 is recorded on the deed)
July 1813-August 1841	Charles Carroll
August 1841-January 1901	Whitall and Rittenhouse Families
January 1901-May 1912	Howard Hinckley
May 1912-October 1928	John Newbold (1915-House moved from middle of present Que. Street)
October 1928-present	The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America

The above is taken verbatim from Jergens's Appendix A, An Abbreviated Chronology Dumbarton House/Property & Owners. In a footnote Jurgens states that "This chronology is abbreviated in the sense that it does not include mortgages or divisions of the property. For these details, see 'Deed List,'" at Dumbarton House archives.

The above chain of title is not consistent with other chains of title in the Society's archives and does not seem consistent with William Gordon's article. Until all deeds have been identified and studied, questions will remain about who owned the property and for how long for the period from 1796 to 1895.

Even without knowing precisely the length of ownership or who was the actual owner in this period, it is clear that the numerous transactions and apparent short duration reflect the real

estate speculation and boom and bust economy of Georgetown in the late eighteenth century into the early nineteenth century.

3. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Unknown.

4. Original plans and construction: The original plan (i.e., early nineteenth century) is believed to be the same as the present plan, with the possibility at the west wing predated the main block, but this speculation, without any supporting documentation.

5. Alterations and additions: In her history of the Colonial Dames, Mrs. Joseph Rucker Lamar, widow of a U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice, former president of the Colonial Dames, and the driving force behind the acquisition and renovation of Dumbarton House quoted a May 1931 report of the chairman of the headquarters committee, "I do not know whether many of you have felt, as I have, that our beautiful Bellevue is too much dressed up and decorated for its dignified old age, too much like a white-haired old lady who has adorned herself with rouge, lipstick and a blond wig. We have recently found some photographs of the house in the Smithsonian Institution which were taken more than fifty years ago, which show that these over-decorations have been added since these pictures were made; in fact, we now know that most of them were added when the house was bought in 1896, and the balance when it was moved back to make room for Q Street, in 1915." (p. 197, *A History of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America: From 1891 to 1933*, ca. 1934, Colonial Dames, published by Walter W. Brown Publishing, Atlanta, GA.) Ms. Lamar was referring to two images, one showing the house as a colonial revival with widows walk and prominent quoins. A photograph of the colonial revival version of the house was published in 1915 and shows its appearance until the 1932 restoration. The other image is pre-colonial revival and has been dated as 1880's as mentioned in Mrs. Lamar's article and was the basis of Fiske Kimball's rave comments on the original appearance of the house. Most notable in the unclear copies of the supposedly 1880s photograph is the absence of colonial revival details and a very different front porch.

In Karri Jurgens's report she reproduces a front and rear photographs of Dumbarton House, dated 1901-1915. The rear photograph- perhaps the only pre-1930s rear facade- shows that one and maybe two windows in the west bay have been filled, a three-sided porch with balustrade, and four steps up to the porch. When the house was moved in 1915, the house was, in essence, lowered so the rear door is at ground level and the front porch is two shallow steps up.

In May 1900, Hinkley, the owner of Dumbarton House was granted a permit to repair the cornice, windows, roof and gutters, fencing and erect new front and rear porches. It is assumed that he added the colonial revival details at that time.

The next permit was issued in 1915 for the owner, John Newbold to move the main portion of the house and erect new foundation and cellar walls. In 1918 he built the garage at the northwest corner of the parcel, according to a permit.

Clearly the history of the house in the late nineteenth century (nor in the twentieth century) is not comprehensively reflected in the permits, but they do confirm the assumptions made earlier by Dumbarton House consultants based on the photographic record that the colonial revival details were added in the late nineteenth/ early twentieth century.

The renovations undertaken by Horace Peaslee, restoration architect, and Fiske Kimball, consulting architect in 1931 and 1932 are much more adequately detailed in the Dumbarton Archives, through the correspondence of Lamar, Peaslee, and Kimball. Also Lamar's book offers a succinct summary: "We have had the house examined by a competent architect who has found that the most pronounced of these exterior decorations are only of wood, not of stone, as I was wrongly informed and that they can be removed without much difficulty. This is true of the quoins on the corners of the house, - they are of wood nailed to the bricks and painted to look like stone... The two wings each had originally four window as we see them in the west wing, but in the east wing a row of windows has been added, in the second story, which destroys the symmetry of the building. There are other exterior changes which we think will add greatly to the simplicity and dignity of the house, and bring it more nearly to what it was originally. There are also changes to be made in the interior. The upper, central windows in the bays have been bricked up and plastered over; the partition between the two east parlors has been taken out and modern inset book cases installed making one long room which is too narrow for its length. On the second floor, a narrow hallway has been run between the large west bedrooms and closets built in them, ceiled with wood and the fireplace closed. Two bathrooms over the front door hide the beautiful window in the upper hall." Mrs. Lamar quoted from the May 1931 report to the council of the National Society and reflects the thinking of Horace Peaslee, Fiske Kimball, and other experts as to what changes should be (and were) made to Dumbarton House. (pages 197-198, Lamar's *A History of the National Society of Colonial Dames of America*)

There has been speculation as to whether the bows on the north elevation are alterations as the bond is Flemish, and so differ from the rest of the rear which is English, and the brick rows appear noncontinuous. As the 1804 auction announcement mentions the bows than if they were not original they were added almost immediately. A more interesting question is why were the bows placed on the rear rather than the front facade? In other cases, such as the David Sears House, by Alexander Parris in Boston's Beacon Hill, Point of Pride in Lynchburg, Va. or the James Caskie House in Richmond, Va, the bow fronts are on the main facade. (Of these houses, only Sears has rounded bows, rather than angled bows, and its second bow was added a few years later when the house was doubled in width. An even earlier house, 1774, the Hammond-Harwood in Annapolis has angled bows on the front of the wings.)

#### B. Historical Context:

According to Mrs. Lamar's history of the Colonial Dames, "Most of the historic, Colonial houses which remain to us in America, are in more or less out-of-the way places, and one has to make a special journey to see them, even in the cities where they stand. But Dumbarton House is



admirably located... There could be no more appropriate place than Washington for such a home as the Society has in mind. For the Capital, despite its museums, art galleries and libraries, has no reminder of its Colonial background such as the Van Cortlandt House furnishes for New York... In view of all these facts the National Board approved the purchase of Bellevue..."

Although the state chapters of the Colonial Dames had restored houses through out the country, this purchase and restoration effort marked the first time the National Society had and it marked the first time the National Society had its own headquarters. Being the Colonial Dames, the leadership wanted a fine house dating to the colonial period and believed that this house was that old, being dated to 1751. Over time, the Colonial Dames were convinced by their experts that this present house (not counting the wings) --- which was first known as Cedar Hill and lath Bellevue and finally renamed Dumbarton House by the Colonial Dames in honor of the eighteenth century Rock of Dumbarton parcel which is present-day Georgetown --- was early nineteenth century and, therefore, Federal period architecture. In keeping with the restoration of the house to its early nineteenth-century appearance, the Colonial Dames have furnished the house with Federal period antiques and possessions of Joseph Nourse who owned the house in the Federal period. Sixty years after the restoration, the Colonial Dames added a ballroom, naming it the Bellevue after the house's second name and the Dames's architect, Martin Rosenblum, R.A., created an addition stylistically compatible with the original building. The Dames acquired the property in October 1928, leased it out until 1931, then had it restored under the direction of Horace Peaslee, FAIA, and Fiske Kimball, consulting architect, with the restoration finished in 1932.

During the Second World War, the Dames lent the building to the American Red Cross for its use.

The Colonial Dames have owned the property longer than any of the previous owners and in turn the house has served as house museum and headquarters longer than it functioned as a family residence. The Joseph Nourse family who lived in the house from 1804 to 1813 (the end of the Federal period) are the family that the Colonial Dames have singled out for interpreting the house. In 1994, the house opened an exhibit entitled "In Search of Joseph Nourse: 1754-1841 America's First Civil Servant." Nourse enjoyed a surprisingly long career starting in 1777 through 1828 with the Federal government and its Revolutionary War predecessor. For forty-eight of those years he was Register of the Treasury and survived every change of administration until that of Andrew Jackson, perhaps the first presidential candidate to run on an anti-Washington platform. The exhibition drew on a wealth of Nourse personal papers and possessions that have been given to the National Society, as well as documents at the University of Virginia.

The Colonial Dames through its restoration and furnishing of the house, and exhibitions and displays have ineluctably cast their interpretation of Federal period architecture, furnishings, and lifestyle on the house. Given the prominence of the National Society of Colonial Dames, the

pre-eminence of its restoration architects, and the quality of the house and its furnishings, the influence of this interpretation goes beyond the Dames and its membership.

An earlier interpretation of the house as a colonial period residence, executed mostly likely in 1900 by then owner Howard Hinckley, while only remaining in a few photographs, is also important. These photographs demonstrate that the colonial revival style --- instigated by the 1876 Philadelphia exposition and most powerfully expressed in the architecture of McKim, Mead & White --- was not simply the popular style for new construction but even was applied as pastiche on authentic early American architecture.

In 1915, the house (without its wings, which supposedly lacked foundations) was moved north so that Q Street could be extended east from 28th Street to Rock Creek Park and a bridge over the park. It has been variously reported that the house was moved 100 or 300 feet. Aside from the relatively unusual occurrence of moving a substantial house, the more interesting aspect is that the house had to be moved to complete a east-west street in upper Georgetown. It is obvious that the house and parcel predated the layout of roads in this section of Georgetown. The earliest section of Georgetown was platted in the mid-eighteenth century, but upper Georgetown was only platted at the end of the century when real estate speculation spread north. Another section, further west, of Q Street although platted early on was only made a passable road in the mid-nineteenth century. Why the government only completed Q Street to the east in the early twentieth century could have been due to any number of factors or combination of factors: political or legal influence of owners, uncertainty of rights of immediate domain (although those rights had been exercised on Q Street between 31<sup>st</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> Streets), lack of municipal planning, or flat population growth made additional routes across the Rock Creek Park unnecessary. In short, the unanswered questions about Dumbarton House, its parcel, and the completion of Q Street raise important questions about the municipal history of Georgetown and Washington, D.C.; other houses in Georgetown, no matter how grand or old, simply do not pose the same questions.

Better understood - and alluded to earlier- is the wide spread real estate speculation that occurred once it was decided that the capitol would be located here and would include Georgetown. The large number of transactions and the short periods of ownership of the parcel vividly detail the frenzy of late eighteenth/ early nineteenth-century real estate speculation in Georgetown. And that people lost money in speculating and saw their homes seized as happened to Samuel Jackson was also a not uncommon occurrence, although it is not known whether Jackson twice mortgaged his house to finance improvements or other real estate acquisition. Every other owner of the parcel, specifically Uriah Forrestt, Isaac Pollock, Peter Casenave, and the Bealls, was a prominent speculator in Georgetown real estate. Other owners, such as Gabriel Duval, who probably bought the house on behalf of Joseph Nourse, was nationally important as Comptroller of the Treasury and subsequently as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Colonial Dames were entitled to view Bellevue, now Dumbarton House, as being of colonial origins. Even without its quoins, the massing of the house, consisting of central block with projecting center, connecting hyphens and wings, creates a five part composition more typical of the mid-eighteenth rather than late eighteenth/early nineteenth century. Only the rear facade with bows flanking the entrance suggests the Federal period of architecture. But the contrast between front (south) and rear (north) facades is more marked than simply dramatically flowing rear and nearly static (by comparison) front. The front facade sits well above Q Street, with a tall brick wall at the front property line. That wall's gate, flanked by tall piers, opens onto quite steep stairs up to the front door. The total effect of these factors is a formal, aloof appearance for the front of Dumbarton House. By contrast, the rear lawn, which is narrow --- with a handsome brick wall with pedimented niche opposite the rear door --- in combination with the sweep of the bows invites one into the backdoor of Dumbarton House.

2. Condition of fabric: The house and grounds appear to be in excellent, well maintained condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The two story with tall attic main block, with full basement is nearly 50 feet wide and nearly 45 feet deep. Each hyphen and wing adds approximately another 25 feet of width and approximately 20 feet of depth. With central hall and stairs and two rooms to either side, the plan of the main block is not unusual. Only the bows on the placements of the chimneys (discussed later) seem out of the ordinary.

At the extreme east end, an assembly room was added in the early 1990's. As part of the same project, an elevator shaft was added and its housing is the two story structure behind the east hyphen, but convincingly disguised to be compatible with the original structure. In fact, it is unlikely that many, if any, visitors notice it.

2. Foundations: It is assumed that the 1915 foundations are brick.

3. Walls: The walls are brick, primarily laid in Flemish bond. However, the central section of the rear wall is laid in common bond as is the north and south sides of the rear central block. It should be noted that there is extensive evidence of patching in terms of mortar and brick.

4. Structural system, framing: It is presumed that the house is of load bearing masonry construction, with the likelihood that steel beams and posts were added -during either the 1915

move, 1930's restoration, or both times. This is an assumption, not based on any visible evidence.

5. Porches, stoops: As mentioned earlier, the house had fairly elaborate front and rear porches, erected in 1900 and demolished when the house was moved. The rear porch was unusual for its angled two sided massing. The front porch was a substantial Colonial revival composition with heavy newels, columns, entablature, and balustrade above the porch, which encompassed the second story central window creating the impression that one could walk out from the window onto the roof of the porch. These descriptions are based on photographs in the Dumbarton House archives and an identical image of the front of the house reproduced in the Records of the Columbia Historical Society, vol. 33-34, plate 19.

When the house was restored by Horace Peaslee and Fiske Kimball, only a front porch was built and it was modeled after the porch at Woodlawn. Peaslee and Kimball assumed that Latrobe had designed the original porch but that it had been replaced twice so they were comfortable modeling the front porch after the one at Woodlawn, as both front facades have similar pedimented treatments. Subsequent scholars question whether Latrobe actually designed the porch because his correspondence only states he intended to design one. The current porch is an unornamented, doric ensemble with four round columns, two pilasters and entablature. One step leads up to the front porch.

A simple porch, echoing the front one, is on the west side of the west wing.

6. Chimneys: The west wing has two small chimneys along the west wall. The other chimneys are the four placed somewhat irregularly in the central block of the house. On the front half of the central block along the east wall and west wall are chimneys for fireplaces in the first and second floor front rooms. The third chimney is at the approximate ridge of the roof halfway between the center of the roof and the west wall. This chimney is for the fireplaces on the first and second floors in the wall between the front and back rooms. The fourth chimney, which seems later and somewhat smaller than the others (although none of them seems older than the 1930's restoration), is north of the roof ridge and close to the center (in terms of width) of the central block. This chimney is for fireplaces along the inside wall of the two rear rooms east of the center hall.

#### 7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The east wing and hyphen has four openings, while the west wing has three. The rear door on the west wing is used by the staff, while the other doors are rarely used. They have simple door surrounds and paneled doors, with the exception that the rear door of the west wing has a three window transom above. The two elaborate secondary doors are the those on the hyphens on the front facade as they have five pane sidelights above panels and a half round blind arch above the door. The arch has stone keystone and imposts.

The rear door of the central block is surprisingly simple and is less ornate than the hyphen doors. Its only elaboration is its three course jack arch, which is repeated in the other secondary doorways.

The main entrance, which is used by visitors, is a fully developed, large scale Federal period doorway with sidelights and fanlight (with curved muntin penetrating the straight muntins radiating out) above. Below each of three sidelights is a wood panel. The edge of the doorway is defined by the stone architrave, which echoes the three part vertical division of the doorway.

b. Windows: The majority of windows are six over six, but as the second floor is treated as a piano nobile, the second story windows are taller. Some windows in the east wing are nine over six. There are no shutters, but the second floor windows on the front facade have half round iron balconies, added by Peaslee and Kimball, based on iron anchors found in the walls. The windows, like the doors, have flat arches, except on the central block the arches are executed in stone, with keystones.

The three major windows are, by contrast, round arched. A Palladian window on the rear facade illuminates the stair landing. This window has the unusual treatment of a band of textured stone above the sidelights and taller center window, serving as a arched lintel. On the front facade, the second story central window has an arched lintel of stone voussoirs, with alternating projecting blocks, suggestive of Gibbs surrounds. This quite handsome treatment is repeated in the half round window above the second story window. In this attic window, the stone voussoir treatment is repeated and the sill is also of stone. (The windows to the ballroom addition echo this window treatment.)

#### 8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The central block is a modified hip-roof, with a flat roof in the middle. The front slope of the roof is intersected by a gable roof over the attic window. The rear slope of the roof is intersected by the two roofs over the bows, creating two pie shaped sections in the rear roof. The west hyphen's gable roof runs east-west and intersects the gable roof of the west wing which runs north-south. The roofing is somewhat more complex on the east side. The east hyphen has sloped roofs which run from the outside walls to the brick-faced elevator housing, which is a gable roof running east-west. In turn, this roof, along with the slope roofs of the east hyphen run perpendicular to the gable roof of the east wing. But only the slope roofs intersect that gable roof. In short, the housing and roof of the elevator shaft behind the east hyphen have been designed to blend in and balance the massing of the west hyphen. All roofs are standing seam metal.

b. Cornice, eaves: The cornice of all but the front facade of the center block is of the simplest type, consisting of crown molding and fascia without ornamentation. An extra band at the bottom or architrave was added on the rear facade to either side of the bow sections.

By contrast, the cornice along the front facade of the center block is ornate, unusual, and quite striking. Below the crown molding and fascia a continuous grid, with longer paired verticals, supports the soffit. Approximately every foot (or somewhat less) the grid projects forward and is supported by three tapered blocks, mounted on a slightly projecting panel. Between these panels and below the flatter sections of the grid is a crossed diagonals on the surface of the fascia.

c. Dormers: None, but there are two flat skylights on the rear roof.

### C. Description of Interiors:

#### 1. Floor plans:

a. First Floor: The center block is a center hall with two parlors to either side. Each room has an entrance off the hall and the front and back parlors are connected by a door on the wall between them. The wall between the front and back parlors on the east side was rebuilt during the 1930's restoration and the fireplace likely moved at this time to the west side, as the wall had been removed, probably in the work of 1900. The west wing and hyphen consist of a front entrance hall, with sitting room to the west. Behind them are the kitchen and office and hall. The east wing and hyphen consist of a research library running the length of the wing and hyphen and behind it are circulation path, elevator, and stairs.

b. Second Floor: The center blocks repeats the first floor plan with the addition of an east-west corridor running from the center hall to the elevator. This corridor was carved out of the space of the northwest room. According to Martin Rosenblum, the restoration architect, who designed the elevator access, the corridor was there already and was not created for the elevator. In the ceiling of this corridor is the pull down latter to the attic. Rosenblum replaced the existing fixed stairs with this pull-down stairs. In Mrs. Lamar's history she did not mention this corridor, but did refer to the one between the two bedrooms to the west of the center hall.

c. Attic: Unfinished.

d. Basement: A series of offices, bathrooms, and circulation space largely reconfigured in the renovation and new construction of the early 1990's.

2. Stairway: An open-string, open-well stairways runs along the west wall. The newell post sits on a volute. The well-portioned landing is illuminated by the rear Palladian window. There are three square balusters per tread. The string is a low relief, twentieth-century ornament vaguely suggestive of stalactite. It is surprising that there is no servant stairway.

The stairway to the basement is beneath the main stairway. The stairs to the attic are pull down stairs.

3. Flooring: Random width boards are used in the parlors and halls. The hall floors are covered in canvas with a painted decoration of small black squares adjacent to polygonal veined white and veined beige polygonals.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster ceilings and wall with crown molding, fluted chair railings and baseboards. The crown mouldings, which are not in every room, are austere with the exception of those in the front hall. A fascia decorated with alternating garlands and urns is beneath an ovolo of petals and grass strands. Above the ovolo is a soffit of alternating rosettes and gutta within a mutule. The outermost edge of the moulding consists of repeating flower petals in profile.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: As in keeping with the detail in the house and perhaps having its origins in the 1930's restoration, the door surrounds are unornamented and simple. The doors have six panels, four tall ones below two narrow ones.

b. Windows: The simple window reveals contain shutters on the front facade.

6. Decorative features and trim: The eight mantels are of the Federal period, but not believed original to the house. The library mantel (southwest room) has an oval or sunburst motif in the center of the frieze which is rotated and repeated in the friezes supported by the pilasters to either side of the fireplace. The mantel in the dining room (northwest room) is much more elaborate with the frieze decorated with the central panel of a sailing ship, flanked by half-round panels of eagles with vines, and friezes above the pilasters are urns. In the southeast room, the central raised panel of the mantel is flanked by garlands, recessed and rotated ovals in the frieze above the pilasters. This mantel also has dentils and is the most elaborate mantel in the house. The mantel in the northeast room is clearly of the Federal period, and like the second floor mantels much less urban and urbane in design and execution than the others on the first floor. Its central panel is fluted and decorated with a primitive garland created by a pattern of small holes. Each mantel encloses a marble surround, ranging from speckled black in the southeast room to a variegated gold in the dining room. Only the southwest room has a metal fireback.

7. The door handles and lockbox look to be of the Federal period or more likely at least some of them are reproductions. On some of the doors, the hinges are angled so that the door lifts slightly over the carpets.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces south several feet above the street. A steep flight of stairs runs from the sidewalk to the front porch. At the west end of the property a

steep driveway runs up to the garage and side entrance to the house. In the front and rear the land is nearly level with the house, but wells were cut in the 1990's renovation at the front basement windows to allow in more light and to make the house appear to sit higher from the front lawn. On the east side, a driveway runs behind a landscaped lot to the parking lot and an entrance to the barroom. Between the barroom and landscaped lot is a generous, outdoor space, flanked on the east by the high wall for the garden lot and to the west by the wall of the barroom and flanking steps up to the front and back lawns of the house. The landscaped lot, which is several feet above the street level, designed in the early 1990's by landscape designer Meade Palmer, offers a steep path from the northwest corner of Q Street and an alley to the open space adjacent to the Dumbarton House ballroom.

A tall, handsome brick wall, with pilasters between stuccoed panels and a central gabled pavilion with niche, designed by Fiske Kimball, separates the property from its neighbor to the north, Evermay.

2. Historic Landscape design: Not known.

3. Outbuildings: Garage, gabled roof, brick walls, erected in 1918.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The best source of information is the Dumbarton Archives which has extensive records pertaining to Joseph Nourse, the records of the National Society concerning the acquisition and restoration of the house, and its furnishings. The archives also has the early photography, before and after the restoration, along with copies of Fiske Kimball, Horace Peaslee, and National Society correspondence, and many other sources such as architect Martin Rosenblum's two volume report. All this material has been thoroughly organized by Karri Jurgens, a former architectural history intern in 1998. Also Jurgens's report and Mrs. Joseph Lamar's *A History of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America* are quite helpful.

Materials at other local archives such as the National Archives, the Historical Society of Washington, and the Peabody Room at the Georgetown branch of the D.C. Public Library are also invaluable.

Prepared by: Bill Lebovich, Architectural Historian, July 1999

### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Georgetown Documentation Project was sponsored by the Commission of Fine Arts and undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) of the National Park Service. Principals involved were Charles H. Atherton, Secretary, U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, and E. Blaine Cliver, Chief, HABS/HAER.



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The documentation was undertaken in two phases. The summer 1998 team was supervised by John P. White, FAIA, Professor of Architecture, Texas Tech University; and architecture technicians Robert C. Anderson, Boston Architectural Center; Aimee Charboneau, Tulane University; Irwin J. Gueco, The Catholic University of America; and Adam Maksay, United States/International Council on Monuments and Sites (US/ICOMOS) architect from the Transylvania Trust. Historic research was initiated by Bryan C. Green, historian, Richmond, Virginia, during this summer. The summer 1999 team was supervised by Roger S. Miller, architect, Alexandria, Virginia, and architecture technicians David Benton, The Catholic University of America; Edward Byrdy, The Catholic University of America; Irwin J. Gueco, The Catholic University of America; and Clara Albert, US/ICOMOS architect from the Transylvania Trust. The project historian, and author of the written reports, was William Lebovich, architectural historian, Chevy Chase, Maryland. The photography was undertaken by Jack E. Boucher, HABS staff photographer, and James Rosenthal, photographic assistant.